CHEAP REPOSITORY.

THE HISTORY OF DILIGENT DICK;

OR,

Truth will out though it be hid in a Well.

Sold by J. MARSHALL,
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The HISTORY, &c.

A falſe witneſs ſhall not go unpuniſhed, and he who ſpeaketh lies ſhall periſh.

DON'T be frightened, Reader! Although I ſet out with a text, I am not going to preach a ſermon, but to tell a ſtory. On the right ſide of Marſh-moor common, and not more than five hundred yards out of the turnpike road, ſtood a lone cottage, inhabited by one Richard Rogers, a day-labourer, commonly called DILIGENT DICK. Though poor, he was as much noted for his honeſty as for the care and induſtry by which he brought up a large family in a very decent manner. About fifteen years ago, in the month of January, there ſuddenly fell a deep ſnow, attended by ſuch a high wind, that many travellers loſt their lives in it. When all on a ſudden, as Rogers and his family were crouding round a handful of fire to catch a laſt heat before they went to-bed, they heard a doleful cry of help! help! for God's ſake help! —Up ſtarted Rogers in an inſtant, when clapping the end of a farthing candle into a broken horn lanthorn, and catching up his ſtaff, out he ſallied,

directing his steps towards the spot from whence the cries came: at length in one of the sand-pits he found a gentleman who had fallen from his horse, and was nearly buried in the snow. Rogers, though with much difficulty, at length dragged him out, and after securing the horse, conveyed them both home.

The gentleman appeared elderly, and seemed almost perished with cold; for a long time he was quite speechless, his jaws appeared locked, and it was only by inward groans they could perceive he had any remains of life in him, so benumbed and stiffened was he with cold; after they had rubbed his limbs for some time before the fire, the gentleman by degrees recovered himself, and began to thank Rogers and his wife, whom he saw busied about him, as well as his children. "Sir," said Betty Rogers, "Although we be poor in pocket, we may nevertheless be kind in heart." Here the stranger, after fetching a deep sigh, said, "if his life were granted him, he hoped it would be in his power to reward them for their kindness." Rogers replied, "that what he had done for him he would have done for his worst enemy." Here the gentleman groaned heavily, saying he had been long sick himself, and that he could not enough admire the healthy looks of Rogers's children.

"Blessed be God, Sir," said Roger, "Although my family is numerous, I never paid a shilling for doctor's stuff in my life, nor do I even know the price of a coffin; if my wealth is small, my wants are few, and though I know I am a sinner and need daily repentance, yet my conscience is sound, for I have knowingly done wrong to no man, nor would I forfeit my good name, Sir, to become the

richeſt man in Old England. I am not covetous of wealth, Sir, ſince I have ſeen how little peace of mind they often enjoy who poſſeſs it; the honeſt man, Sir, ſleeps ſoundly on the hardeſt bed, whilſt he who has made too much haſte to be rich, may lie down on the ſofteſt bed with an aching heart, but ſhall not be able to find reſt." All this while Betty Rogers ſat puffing and blowing the fire with a pair of broken-noſed bellows in order to boil her kettle, to make the gentleman a diſh of her coarſe bohea tea, as ſhe had no ſpirits or liquor of any kind except ſpring water to offer him; ſhe alſo toaſted a bit of bread, though ſhe had no butter to rub over it; yet ſhe hoped the gentleman would excuſe it, ſince many of the farmers were ſo extortionate in their price of butter and cheeſe, that ſome of their labourers live for the greater part of their time on bread only or a few potatoes.

Here the gentleman attempted to partake of Betty's tea and toaſt, when all at once he began to tremble all over ſo exceedingly, that he begged ſhe would ſet it down for the preſent, for if he was to attempt to ſwallow it, he was certain it would choke him. "It is but cold comfort to be ſure, Sir," ſaid Rogers, "we have to offer you; but nevertheleſs we muſt hope you will take the will for the deed. I ſuppoſe, Sir, you are very rich, and yet you now ſee, that all the wealth in the world cannot help a man in certain ſituations. I had a pretty education, Sir, and I remember when I was a boy at ſchool to have read the hiſtory of a great king, who when harraſſed by the enemy, and being overcome with thirſt, was thankful to a poor ſoldier who brought him a draught of cold water in his helmet, which he drank off greedily, ſaying, that amidſt all hi-

pomp he had never tasted such luxury as that cup of water yielded him. So you see, Sir, what strange ups-and-downs there are in life; therefore people of all degrees should be careful to keep pride out of their hearts, since the most prosperous man to-day, may be thankful for the poor man's assistance to-morrow. "And after all" cried Betty Rogers, "high and low, rich and poor, should pray daily for God's grace, since that alone can give peace to their poor souls when the hour of affliction cometh. But bless me," cried she, clasping her hands, "what shall we do, our last inch of candle is burnt out?" "Then, said Rogers," we must content ourselves, my Betty, with passing the rest of the night in the dark." The gentleman said he must be content to do as they did. "Many is the dark night, Sir," said Richard, "have I sat by my dame's bed-side when she has been sick or lying-in, endeavouring to make up to her in kindness what I could not provide for her in comforts, when I have not had the least glimmering of light, but what came from the twinkling stars through our tattered casement.

"Amidst all our poverty, Sir, we have ever been the happiest pair in each other. It is a brave thing, Sir, to be able, by the grace of God, to drive sin out of the cottage when poverty enters in; for sin is the father of shame. A man, Sir, amidst the extremest poverty, yet may stand high in the favour of God, by patience, prayer, and a hearty faith in his Redeemer."

Here the stranger appeared under very great distress both of body and mind, he shivered all over as if he had an ague fit upon him, and by a little blast, which was just then lighted up, they perceived he looked as pale as death; they begged him

to lie down on their bed, saying, "it was very clean, though it was ill provided with sheets and blankets." O my good people, cried the gentleman, your goodness will be the death of me; the kindness of your hearts proves to me the unkindness of my own: No, go you to bed, and let me sit here till morning. That Rogers said they could not do. The gentleman then replied, he should be glad if Rogers would give him a little history of himself and family to beguile the time.

"That I will do most readily, Sir," said he, if *so be* it will oblige you in the least.—My name is Rogers, although my neighbours are pleased to call me DILIGENT DICK. I have a wife and seven children; I rise with the lark and lie down with the lamb. I never spend an idle penny or an idle moment, though my family is numerous, my children were never a burden to me. That good woman there, Sir," pointing to his wife, "puts her hand to the labouring oar: she brings up our children at home in such a sober industrious manner, that our neighbours, as soon as they are capable of earning a penny, are glad to take them off our hands. I am proud to say, Sir, they have no little pilfering tricks, as many children have. 'Train up a child in the way he should go,' is our way Sir, and I am certain both my wife and I have felt the benefit of the text, for our children are kind and affectionate towards each other, dutiful to us their parents, and obliging and civil to their employers. Ah, Sir, the richest man in England is not happier than I am, when I return home of an evening, wearied by the heat and labour of the day, to be received with looks of kindness by my wife, as she is preparing our frugal supper, whilst

two or three of my little babies climb my knees to fondle me round the neck." Again the traveller groaned piteously; but Rogers went on. "I was born to a pretty fortune, Sir; but by the villainy of my father's brother I loſt my inheritance. My uncle, Charles Rogers, through the indulgence of his mother, proved to be a very malicious child, and as he grew up to man's eſtate, the faults of the child became hardened vices in the man, inſomuch that his wicked behaviour broke his mother's heart. My own dear mother, Sir, like the parents of Samuel, taught me betimes to fear the Lord; yet my grandfather was ſo much offended at my father's marrying her, that he made his will, and cut him off with a ſhilling. He and my poor mother died within a twelvemonth of each other, and left me pennyleſs by the time all their debts were paid. I was then about twelve years of age, and my Betty's father kindly took me to live with him. He ſoon received a meſſage from my grandfather, with a preſent of twenty guineas to pay for my board, ſaying, he was very ill, and that he would ſend for me when he was better, the next news I heard of him was that he was dead, and though he had promiſed to make a will in my favour, yet none was to be found, although one of his old ſervants declared he had ſigned a great ſheet of parchment, which a lawyer had been writing by my grandfather's bed-ſide. Every body now judged my uncle Charles very hardly, as having made away with this laſt will, becauſe he brought forward the old one, wherein my grandfather had left his whole property to him. Some kind friends of my father wiſhing to ſee juſtice done by me, commenced an action againſt both him and the lawyer, who was known

to be a rogue, and ready to do any dirty work for money.

"The trial was brought on at the next assizes, when my uncle employed such arts in securing the witnesses, that a verdict was given against me. After some months, however, my uncle sent me twenty guineas, that I might be put apprentice to a carpenter; but expected he should never be troubled about me again. Accordingly I was bound out; but my master proved one of those negligent tradesmen who loved his ease better than his work: by neglecting his business, his business began to neglect him. He broke at length for a considerable sum of money, and was thrown into prison, where he died soon after of the jail distemper, so at the end of the third year of my apprenticeship, I was once more left to seek for bread. I returned again to my Betty's father, who got me employment under his master. I was about one and twenty when I married, and then I and my wife followed my master's son into this country, who had an estate left him, and with him I have worked ever since, and with truth I can say, I have never received an unkind word from him, for he never saw me drunk, not even at sheep-shearing or at harvest home. My Betty's pious meekness, Sir, has sweetened all my toil, whilst the dutiful behaviour of my children has fulfilled every wish of my heart. Whether my cruel uncle be dead or living I know not; but be it as it may, I do not envy him his ill-gotten wealth, and I can only pray that he may repent him of his sins, before sickness brings him to a death bed; for it is a horrible thing, Sir, to have the conscience racked with despair when the body is afflicted with pain."

"Bleſs me, Richard," cried Betty Rogers, "you are talking on, and on, whilſt I am ſure the poor gentleman is going into a fit." The gentleman at that inſtant gave a deep groan and would have fallen from his chair, if Rogers had not caught him in his arms, whilſt his wife ſnatching up the little mug of tea, which ſhe ſtill kept warm in the aſhes, ſhe put it to the ſtranger's lips, begging him to take a ſip, as ſhe was ſure it would do him good. Whilſt her huſband, on the other hand, begged him to eat a bit of the toaſt. The gentleman could but juſt make ſhift to ſay, "My good people you are too kind to me." "Not at all, Sir," ſaid Rogers, "we do no more for you, than we would for our worſt enemy." "O God," cried the traveller, "what will become of me? My ſight fails me, my fleſh trembles, and my joints ach, I freeze and burn at the ſame moment.

"Poor dear gentleman!" ſaid Betty Rogers, wiping her eyes, "I am afraid he is going light-headed, do pray, Sir, drink a drop more of the tea, and eat a bit of the toaſt alſo," anſwered Richard. "I dare not taſte it my good friends," replied the gentleman, "for I feel as if it would choke me were I to attempt it; but tell me, I pray, is there not ſomewhere a text of Scripture which ſays, 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirſt, give him drink, for, in ſo doing, thou ſhalt heap coals of fire on his head. O Rogers, Rogers, thou will ſay ſo indeed, when thou art told I am thy wicked uncle Charles."

Here Rogers and his wife had nearly ſwooned away with aſtoniſhment. "Then I am heartily glad to ſee you uncle," cried Rogers, "and if you have really done me wrong I forgive you with all my

ſoul, as I hope to be forgiven myſelf." Here Mr. Rogers's grief appeared ſo great, he ſeemed almoſt beſide himſelf. "But do not be ſurpriſed," cried he, as ſoon as he could ſpeak, "to ſee me here; this is the ſecond attempt I have made, Rogers, to viſit thy humble dwelling; but more of that hereafter;" in about a quarter of an hour, Mr. Rogers, after ſhedding bitter tears, ſpoke as follows:

"The world, Richard, has long believed me to be a very happy man, ſeeing that I poſſeſſed an abundance of the good things of this world, but what man ever yet was happy, who carried ſecret guilt in his boſom? Thy grandfather, on his death bed, became duly ſenſible of his unforgiving ſpirit towards thy poor father, for no other crime, had he committed, but his having married a woman who brought him no money; he therefore reſolved that the laſt buſineſs of his life ſhould be doing an act of juſtice towards thee, his only ſon, accordingly he ſent for his Attorney, made a new will, bequeathing thee that property which he would have given thy father had he been living, he alſo deſired much to ſee thee, which I took eſpecial care to prevent, fearing thy youth and innocence would win upon his love. After his deceaſe, by the advice, and with the aſſiſtance of his rogue of an Attorney, we burnt my father's laſt will, and produced that which he had made many years before, wherein he had cut thy father off with a ſhilling. The deed was no ſooner done, than I felt, as it were, all the torments of hell raging in my ſoul, it was done at the very moment his people were laying my aged father's body in the coffin." Here Mr. Rogers grew ſo faint he could not go on.

"Merciful Heaven," cried Richard, with hands and eyes up lifted, "how covetouſneſs hardens the heart of man! what a ſafe-guard has my poverty been to me! riches might have enſnared my ſoul too." As ſoon as Mr. Rogers could ſpeak he went on. "Thou haſt juſt mentioned, Richard, the trial that was brought forward after my father's deceaſe, reſpecting his will, when the Attorney whom I was to pay five hundred pounds for the villainous part he had acted, ſwore he never had made a ſecond will for my father, and I ſwore to the ſame effect; yes, Richard, I ſwore upon the holy Bible, which pronounces a deadly curſe on him who ſwears falſly; yea, I called on that eternal God to witneſs a lie, before whom I muſt ſhortly be judged for it, and now my grey hairs are brought to the brink of the grave, I begin to feel, that the ſting of Death is Sin; very miſerable has been my life, and very terrible no doubt will be my death. Being now in poſſeſſion of a clear four hundred pounds a year, I began to fancy all things would go proſperouſly and ſwimmingly on; I bought, and I ſold, and no man's traffick ſeemed to turn to better account; but no ſucceſs in life, Richard, could blunt the ſting of guilt within me; when I laid me down to reſt at night I feared to truſt myſelf to ſleep, leſt I ſhould betray my ſecret, and my very dreams became ſo diſturbed, that the ſervants would often hear my ſcreams at the other end of the houſe. One night I dreamt I was going to be executed for deſtroying a will, and the next I fancied I was going to be tranſported for perjury. All my neighbours believed me to be a happy man, only becauſe they ſaw me a proſperous one. My covetous deſires were never ſatisfied, and whilſt I went on heaping up guinea upon

guinea, my mind was hourly afflicted with the dread of poverty. My wife all of a sudden grew melancholy, and by an accident she fell into the pond, and was drowned; when my son came of age I settled him on the estate, which my father in his will had left to thee; he was a dissolute young man, and coming home one night very much intoxicated with liquor, he fell across the bed with a lighted candle in his hand, which instantly set fire to the curtains, and he perished in the flames, one of my daughters turned out very vicious, and the other died of a broken heart from the cruel usage of her husband. Besides all these trials, I had another very severe one from the Attorney, who was always racking me for money, and telling me he would turn King's evidence, and impeach me, if ever I refused him. At length, without a moment given him for repentance, he was suddenly carried off by a paralytic stroke. My spirits began to revive after his death, as my crime now was known only to myself: but peace can never dwell in the guilty bosom. I left off going to church, for there my condemnation stared me full in the face. The Ten Commandments were written in golden letters on each side of the Altar, then my own wicked conscience would whisper me, how many of those sacred commands I had broken, I had taken the holy name of God in vain, I had prophaned the Sabbath, I had been undutiful to my parents, I HAD BORNE FALSE WITNESS AGAINST MY NEIGHBOUR." At length, however, so grievously burdened was my conscience I resolved occasionally to attend church, hoping it would be a kind of sponge to rub out some of my sins. One Sunday I re-

member our parſon told us in his ſermon there can be no real repentance for ſin, without forſaking it, adding moreover, that if any of his congregation, had defrauded his neighbour of aught, he entreated them, if ever they hoped their ſouls would find mercy in the day of grace, that they ſhould make reſtitution, before death ſhould cut them off from the land of the living, ſince there was no repentance in the grave.

Theſe words ſo worked upon my mind, that I fell ſick, and during my illneſs, I called on Heaven to witneſs, that if life were granted me, I would reſtore to thee what I had ſo unjuſtly kept from thee; but as my health returned, ſo did my good reſolutions vaniſh away again, I cheated myſelf with the thought that I might yet enjoy life many years, thus I went on till the reſtleſs workings of my conſcience almoſt overpowered me, and having enquired out the place of thy abode, mounted my horſe and ſet out, with the reſolution to diſcover the whole hiſtory of my villainy to thee; but when I came within ſight of thy cottage, I found my principles were not ſtrong enough to confeſs myſelf a rogue before thee, I turned my horſe about, and went home again. I next took to hard drinking to ſtifle reflection, but all would not do, for ſtill the gnawings of a guilty conſcience devoured me; as my health declined, the ſtronger the fear of death came upon me. Again I reſolved once more to go in ſearch of thee, and earneſtly did I pray to God to aſſiſt my endeavours, and the nearer I approached to thy little dwelling, the more was my courage ſtrengthened to proceed. The ſudden

fall of ſnow coming on was the cauſe of my being benighted, and miſſing my way when I fell into the pit; but ah, Richard, it ſeems, as if Heaven had appointed thee to preſerve my life in this world, and my ſoul from deſtruction in the next, by pointing out to me the only path in which a penitent ſinner can tread with ſafety. It is not for mortal man, Richard, to tell what agony of mind I have endured this night: thy kindneſs and that of thy wife nearly overcame me, and I the leſs feared to make a diſcovery of myſelf to thee, when I found every action of thy daily life was governed by the principles of religion, ſince good men alone can heartily forgive their enemies.

"O Rogers! Rogers! how bleſt is thy condition, when compared with mine: if thou art poor, thou art honeſt; in addition to a quiet conſcience, thou haſt a healthful and happy family ſmiling around thee. I abound in wealth it is true; but my health is gone, I have loſt my reſt, and I carry in my boſom the ſharp goadings of a wounded ſpirit which I am unable to bear."

Here Mr. Rogers finiſhed his truly melancholy hiſtory, at which both Rogers and his wife ſhed abundance of tears, and at the ſame time they did all in their power to comfort him. The next day Rogers attended his uncle home, when he ſent for the clergyman of his pariſh, who was a very experienced chriſtian, made a full confeſſion of his guilt to him, hoping he would give him his beſt advice how to fit and prepare himſelf for another world. Mr. Rogers lived but a few weeks after this, and died full of horror at the ſins of his paſt life.

How myſterious are the ways of Providence, who in an inſtant can bring the moſt ſecret plots to light, for truly the proverb ſays, "Truth will out, though it be hid in a well."

S.

THE END.

Next month will be publiſhed a Continuation of the Hiſtory of Mr. Bragwell.